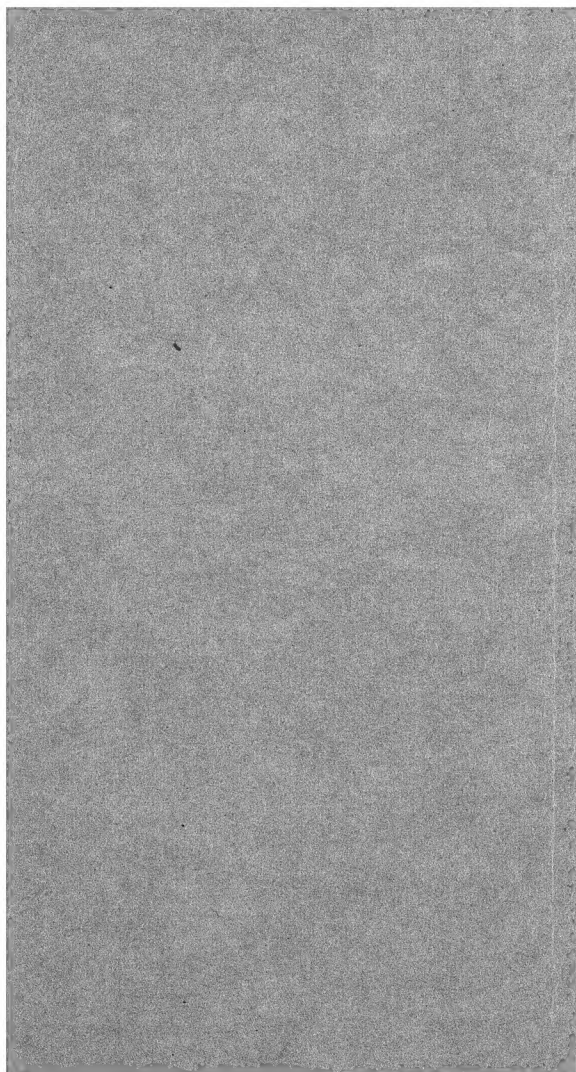


MILESTONES
OF
METHODISM
IN
CALGARY
AND
CANADA

BY
DR. G. W. KERBY

PASTOR, CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH
1903-1911





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It was in November, 1729, in a little room at Lincoln College, Oxford, that John and Charles Wesley and two other students agreed to meet three times a week for the earnest study of the Greek New Testament.

This was the beginning of a movement that historians tell us saved the civilization of the eighteenth century. A movement that swept on and out into the tide currents of world life until today it has a membership of more than thirty-two millions and there is scarcely a corner of the globe and not a country in the world where the voice of a Methodist minister or pioneer Methodist missionary is not heard telling the good news of the Christ and His Kingdom.

The year 1774 marks the second great milestone of Methodism. That was the year Barbara Heck and her husband, pioneer Methodists of New York City, settled in Upper Canada.

Come with me for a moment to that little country burying ground in Augusta township, Ontario. Stand beside a certain gray granite stone and read the inscription thereon.

"Barbara Heck put her brave soul up against the rugged possibilities of the

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future and under God, brought into existence Canadian and American Methodism."

This is one of the hallowed spots of Continental history. Barbara Heck's faith established Methodism in North America, and brought millions of people into a knowledge of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The Methodist Church in Canada alone has a membership of more than four hundred and fourteen thousand and a Sunday School enrollment of over three hundred and seventy thousand; while one million one hundred and fifty-nine thousand four hundred and fifty-eight persons have placed their names on the census roll of Canada as Methodists.

Westward the course of Empire takes its way. The Methodist circuit rider has ever been in the van of the unending procession. Only the other day a monument was erected in the City of Washington to his heroic and nation-wide service.

September, 1840, is the date of the third notable milestone in Canadian Methodist history. That was the year when the British Methodist conference decided to open up missions in the Hudson Bay Company's territory of the great West. James Evans, the inventor of the Cree Syllabic system, was made general superintendent of the work and stationed at Norway House. Robert Rundle, at Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House; William Masson at Moose Factory. Peter Jacobs and Henry Steinhauer were appointed assistants to William Mason.

The district was almost a continent in extent, stretching from Lake Superior to Northern Alberta. Evans, at Norway House, was at the centre of a fifteen hun-

dred mile circuit. The only means of travel being by canoe, dog train and snowshoes.

Robert Rundle was the first Protestant missionary of the Great Northwest, and the first permanent missionary of any denomination to settle in the far West Province of Alberta east of the Rocky Mountains. He reached Edmonton on September the eighteenth, 1840, and Rocky Mountain House a little later, where he began at once to "sow the seeds of eternal life" among the wild and warring tribes on the eastern slopes of the Rockies. He continued his work with untiring energy and devotion for eight years, when through an accident he was forced to relinquish his labors and return to England. His memory is perpetuated in the shining mountain peak that bears his name.

The year 1854 is another milestone in Western Methodism. The management of the missionary work in the West passed from the British Wesleyan Conference into the hands of the Canadian Conference.

Reverend John Ryerson, brother of Edgerton Ryerson, was sent out to re-organize the territory. He brought with him Robert Brooking, who was placed at Oxford House; Allan Sault, at Rainy Lake, and Thomas Hurlburt, at Norway House. The latter was also made chairman of the whole district. John Ryerson on his return took with him Henry Steinhauer, a young native Indian missionary. They visited the British Isles. On their return to Canada Steinhauer and a young man, Thomas Woolsey by name, were ordained at the conference of 1855 in London, Ontario, and sent out to the far away field of Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House to take up the work that Rundle had been compelled to leave some years before. For four years they

were the only Protestant missionaries in all this extensive field.

The year 1860 marks a new era in Western missionary work. That was the year George McDougall, a missionary among the Indians in Northwestern Ontario was chosen to succeed Robert Brooking, and placed at Norway House with the additional responsibility of superintending the missions between Lake Superior on the East and the Rocky Mountains on the West. He was accompanied in this work by his son, John McDougall, a young man at that time attending Victoria college, and Henry Steinhauer.

The fifteen years that followed tell of his heroic struggles in the "great lone land" amongst warring Indians, pestilence, fire and blood, until that day in January, 1876 when he lay down to die on the prairie—his home and platform, his hunting ground and resting place.

He had the prophetic vision; he was a great seer; of no man could it be more truly said, he

" . . . heard the tramp of pioneers,
Of millions yet to be,
The first low wash of waves where soon
Should roll a human sea."

On the death of George McDougall the mantle of this modern Elijah fell upon the shoulders of the young Elisha, John McDougall. It may be said of him, as of one of old, "he went on his way, and the Angel of the Lord met him."

In 1862 he had journeyed westward with his father over the long, lonely trail from Norway House to Edmonton. His territory in the far west lay from Edmonton to the forty-ninth parallel, with frequent trips to

other parts of Western Canada, and beyond. Forty years he carried on his work as a missionary of the Cross, as a pioneer patriot and Empire builder, until on January the fifteenth, 1917, in the words of his friend, John McLean,

"He went home to God, in the white stone canoe, to the islands of the Blessed that lie beyond the setting sun."

He found the Indian in paganism and savagery—he left him enjoying the privileges of civilization.

He found the West as "No man's land," he left it "Every man's land," the land for the crowd.

He found the West the home of the wild buffalo—he left it the home of a new federation of races.

He found the West without schools, churches or government—he left it with education, government and religion as well organized as anywhere on the Continent.

He found the West without ideals, without purpose, without conscious sense of opportunity or responsibility—he left it alive and alert with the sentiments of Empire and the thoughts of the great new Christian Democracy struggling for a place in the life of the people.

In those forty-one years between the death of George McDougall, the father, and John McDougall, the son, a new age and a new nation had sprung into being.

"The rudiments of Empire here
Were plastic yet and warm;
The elements of a mighty world
Were rounding into form."

John McDougall opened up the Morley Mission School in 1873. In that year the

only white woman in all Alberta, from the Saskatchewan River to the Southern boundary, was Mrs. John McDougall. The next year the second white woman came south, and she was Mrs. David McDougall. These two elect ladies are with us still. The story of their unselfish and self-sacrificing loyalty is typical of the part played by the wives of missionaries and early settlers in the making of the West.

The autumn of 1875 saw the beginnings of Methodism in Calgary, and marks another important milestone. At that time Calgary was only a Mounted Police post. The first missionary of any denomination on the ground was Rev. John McDougall.

He held his first service in the Northwest Mounted Police barracks, near the corner of Ninth Avenue and Sixth Street East, where the present freight sheds of the Canadian National railway are now located. During the same autumn I. G. Baker and Co. opened a trading post near the site of the present isolation hospital on Twelfth Avenue East. Throughout the Fall and Winter the Methodists held service in the I. G. Baker & Company's store. In those days the stores were kept open on Sunday; they closed the store, however, while the service was being held. Later on the Company put up a notice that the store would be closed all day Sunday.

This store which was used by the kind permission of the owners as a meeting house, was in charge of Mr. King, for many years Calgary's Postmaster and still one of our most respected citizens.

In the summer of 1877 John McDougall built the first Methodist Church in this valley. Its location was on what is now Sixth Avenue and Sixth Street East, a little

west of the R.N.W.M.P. barracks. It was a log building with a shingled roof, the logs having been floated down the Bow River from Morley, and some of them whipsawed into lumber and shingles.

The Rev. James Turner was appointed the first regular pastor of the Methodist Church in Calgary in July, 1883, a new church was built. This church was located east of the Elbow and was opened for service in December of the same year. The building was of frame and canvas. The actual building of the church was largely accomplished through the efforts of the Hon. W. H. Cushing, and of the Methodist churches built in Calgary since that time, there is scarcely one that has not received his practical help and encouragement in getting started. The C.P.R. reached Calgary during 1883.

A short time after this the greater part of the town moved to the west of the Elbow and it was found necessary to move the church to the corner of Eighth Avenue and Fourth Street East.

This frame and canvas church gave way in 1884 to a new and larger frame church, which was built on the corner of Seventh Avenue and First Street East, where the Beveridge Block now stands.

A more pretentious building of brick was erected in 1889 at the corner of Sixth Ave. and Second St. West. This building is now the Arlington Hotel, and had a seating capacity of about three hundred.

In July, 1898, the Rev. Fred. Langford, B.A., B.D., was appointed pastor. During the five years of his service as pastor steps were taken towards the building of the present Central Church. Under his leader-

ship a subscription of several thousand dollars was secured, an architect engaged, and the plans of the present church prepared and accepted.

Sir James Lougheed, Hon. W. H. Cushing, Howard Douglass, T. B. Braden, Peter McCarthy, Alex. McBride, R. A. Jones and Walter Jarett were closely associated as trustees in the building of some or all of the above named churches.

July, 1903, saw the present speaker, Rev. Geo. W. Kerby, B.A., D.D., installed as pastor of the new Central Church that was to be. Later on in the autumn it was decided to begin the building of the new church and J. H. Whittleton was engaged as building superintendent. The present building was completed and dedicated in February, 1905, twenty years ago. The Rev. Leonard Gaetz, D.D., preaching the opening sermon. Dr. Kerby remained pastor for eight years, when he was asked to take the principalship of the new Mount Royal College.

At this time the floodtide of emigration into the West was just beginning. These were eventful years to Calgary and to Canada.

Central Church, because of its location, the character of its building and equipment, its leadership and the spirit of its people, exercised a far-reaching and momentous influence on the thousands of newcomers needing counsel, guidance and encouragement in the difficulties incident upon the settlement of a new country.

Eighteen years ago the editor of an Eastern journal, after having spent some time in Calgary, wrote his impressions of Central Church. "Some day," he said, "the history of this fair land will be penned—

but there will be an unwritten chapter. Not on the pages of paper, but in the lives of men who have gone out from this city, inspired to better deeds and nobler purposes by timely words of wisdom and little acts of kindness—seeds that dropped on tender soil in a critical period of life when surrounding circumstances made lonely and impressionable hearts susceptible to teaching—will the work being done in the Central Methodist Church of Calgary, be written. And its effect upon the community and the nation at large, Eternity alone can tell."

And we may add, men, and women too, prominent in the life of this city, of this Province and the nation, and some in the far-flung outposts of the Empire, received their incentive, their inspiration, and their widening vision of Christian citizenship and service from the Truth declared in this pulpit, and from the influence of the Sunday School, Epworth League, Men's Own Young Men's Club, and other activities connected with this great Church.

No sooner did the new church open its doors than an overflowing congregation crowded its services, and the need of other churches in different parts of the city became urgent; and Central Church was at once the Mother Church of Methodism in Calgary.

The First Wesley Church was dedicated on September the thirteenth, 1906. It was located on the south side of 13th Ave., between Seventh and Eighth St. West, and the four lots were bought from the city for \$1,000.00, the building is still in use by another denomination.

The first meeting, looking toward the formation of the new church, was held in Mr. Web Shelley's house, on the corner of Eighth St. West and Twelfth Ave. Later a meeting was held for the organization of the Board, in the little frame school-house on the block where the Central High School now stands. The names of the trustees most intimately associated with the beginning of the new Wesley Church were: T. VanDelinder, Web Shelley, J. E. Bull, Arthur Bennet, and J. B. Hill.

The first Trinity Church was opened in October, 1906. Mr. E. H. Crandel undertaking to have it ready for dedication on our return from general conference in Montreal. The present Trinity Church is to be known henceforth as the Cushing Memorial United Church of Canada. St. Paul's, Hillhurst, on January the first, 1908; Crescent Heights, December the twenty-seventh, the same year.

Plans for the latter two were provided by Mr. James Garden, who also superintended the building of these two churches and the Victoria Methodist Church as well. The First Bankview Church (now Scarboro Avenue), February, 1909, and South Calgary, Victoria, Zion, West Calgary, Stanley Park and Parkdale, in the order named, at later dates.

In most cases the beginnings of these different churches took place in private homes, where the neighbors were invited in and a prayer meeting or a preaching service held. Later a Sunday School was organized and this was followed by the formation of Church Boards, and steps taken to secure lots and erect a building.

It would be interesting, were there time, to go into the details of some incidents and experiences connected with the work of Central Church and the beginnings of the other Methodist Churches in the city. We venture to relate only one, connected with the starting of what is now the Crescent Heights Methodist Church.

One Monday morning, a tall, lean, lanky individual, more than six feet high, called at the parsonage and said to me, "I called to see if something cannot be done for the spiritual interests of the children living on the North Hill. It is too far," he said, "for them to come to the Central Sunday School." I asked him, "have you enough children up on the Hill to start a Sunday School?" He answered, "I have eleven of my own to begin with."

"Where could we meet," I asked. "You could meet in my house," he replied. "Very well," I said, "go out among your neighbors (there were just a few scattered shacks at that time) and invite them to come to your home on Thursday evening, and I will be there to meet them and speak with them, and we will talk the matter over together."

The meeting was held and steps were taken at once to organize a Sunday School to be held in this same house. A little later we started a preaching service and a little later still we secured the lots on which the present Crescent Heights Church was built.

At the time, these lots seemed to be so far out that it might take years before sufficient population would surround them to justify the building of a church. In less

than two years the First Church was built, and that church is now in the very centre of the business life and population of Crescent Heights, and the Sunday School is one of the most active and progressive in the city.

Central Church suffered from a disastrous fire in 1915, which destroyed the organ and burned most of the woodwork in the main auditorium; making necessary a new organ, new roof and a complete furnishing for the auditorium. Dr. S. W. Fallis, who was pastor at that time, with commendable enterprise took charge of the task of repairing the damage done by the fire; and in this work he was ably and enthusiastically supported by Fred. Albright, one of the leaders among the young men of the congregation, who later gave up his life in the Great War.

The pastors who have occupied the pulpit of the present building, in the order of their appointment, were Geo. W. Kerby, Sanford E. Marshall, S. W. Fallis, Chas. A. Sykes, and H. W. Avison, the present incumbent. The assistant pastors have been C. W. Bishop, Robert Pearson, W. Wilkin, W. G. Martin, T. E. Armstrong, Bruce Hunter, and E. S. Bishop.

The last and most significant milestone of Canadian Methodism will be reached on June 10th, 1925, in the City of Toronto.

At that time the Methodist Church in Canada, with its history, traditions and romance of heroic pioneer service east and west—with its wealth and variety of spiritual values—with its missionary enterprise and evangelistic fervor—with its sense of social obligation and religious education

and training—with its world view of religion and citizenship—with its warmth of Christian fellowship and its spirit of brotherhood—with its Sunday Schools, Colleges, Universities and Hospitals — with its churches, congregations and ministers — with its great body of Christian laymen and laywomen—without reserve and with complete unanimity; reverently, intelligently and with a heartening thought of all that God has wrought and of all the way He has led the church in the past; with courage and confidence and unswerving faith, and with a widening vision of the future,—at that final milestone along the triumphant march of its progress through the years, Canadian Methodism will place all on the altar of the United Church of Canada.

And why? Animated by one holy impulse and supreme purpose—for a new realism of faith—for a uniting of the old values of the spirit with a new vision of the world and a fulfilling of the passionate longing for Christian unity—for a deepening sense of religion and a re-appraisal of religious experience—for a re-discovery of the inner life and a revival of the mystic element in religion—the search after God the better to fit us to cope with the bewildering issues of our age; and for a synthesizing of all these in the eager, earnest, insistent desire for a better understanding of Jesus—His way, His will, His spirit, His teaching, Who alone has in His keeping the

secret the World needs to know—that His Kingdom may more fully come in Canada, in the Empire, and in the World.

“Sail on, O Union strong and great.
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years
Is hanging breathless on thy fate.
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea;
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee.
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our
tears,
Our faith triumphant o’er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee.”



